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**U.S. STEPS UP ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS IN NORTHSTATE
SIX INDICTED FOR OPERATING METHAMPHETAMINE SUPERLAB**

REDDING, CALIFORNIA--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott today announced that federal and local law enforcement detected and dismantled another methamphetamine "superlab" in the Northstate. The meth lab operation was the product of a Tehama County investigation although the actual lab site was in Glenn County. The lab was in operation until the defendants' arrests in May of this year. This is the third meth superlab manufacturing operation uncovered in the last three years.

Those charged in the indictment are JESUS MANZO VALENCIA, 27, FELIPE DEJESUS DEVORA, 28, MARIO ANTONIA VALENCIA, 21, FRANCISCO VALENCIA GONZALES, 23, ELODIO LUCATERO VALENCIA, 28, AND CRISOFORO ESPINOA, ALSO KNOWN AS MIGUEL VALENCIA, 32. Hometowns of the defendants are not known. All of the defendants are in custody.

The indictment charges the defendants with conspiracy to manufacture methamphetamine. According to United States Attorney Scott, a recent crackdown on methamphetamine labs in the lower Central Valley has pushed so called "superlabs" northward into Shasta, Tehama, and Trinity counties. The DEA considers a meth lab a "superlab" if it can produce at least 10 pounds of methamphetamine per operation. According to DEA agents, the lab shut down in Glenn County was capable of producing between 35 and 45 pounds per operation. While noting the importance of the cooperative efforts between federal and local law enforcement, United States Attorney Scott also emphasized that the dangers associated with methamphetamine in the Northstate area cannot be overstated. Scott said, "During my time as the Shasta County District Attorney, I saw a dramatic rise in the prevalence of methamphetamine use in this community. Recent studies confirm that this is a dangerous drug that does great harm to those who use it. Safety concerns increase as we see more persons under the influence of methamphetamine in the workplace, driving on our highways, or operating heavy equipment. We on the federal side will spare no resources in an attempt to reverse this very troubling trend." In addition, Scott noted that the United States Attorney's involvement is appropriate in prosecuting large methamphetamine labs. "The prosecution of meth manufacturers is a top priority for the United States Attorney's Office because this drug has such a destructive effect on our communities," Scott said, pointing out that "Federal prosecutors are able to obtain much greater sentences for these types of crimes." Under federal sentencing guidelines, if convicted, the defendants in this case will face sentences of no less than ten years, and up to life in federal

prison.

This case is the result of a joint investigation between the California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement, the North State Initiative of the California Multi-Jurisdictional Methamphetamine Enforcement Team ("CalMMET"), the federal DEA, the Shasta County Interagency Narcotic Task Force, the Tehama and Glenn County Methamphetamine Task Force, the Butte Interagency Narcotics Task Force, the California Highway Patrol, and the Tehama and Glenn County District Attorneys' Offices. In June 2002, the DEA opened its Redding office. The DEA agents have been working with local law enforcement in order to bring more resources to bear against those who manufacture methamphetamine in the Northstate. Gordon Taylor, the Agent in Charge of the Redding Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) office, said, "This case is important because it sends a powerful message that there is no welcome mat for rogue meth organizations in the Northstate. The DEA and its partners in law enforcement are on the job and will see that these criminals are caught and brought to justice."

Local agencies participating in the North State Initiative of CalMMET are the sheriff's departments of Butte, Shasta, Siskiyou and Tehama counties, the Redding Police Department and the California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement. The Tehama County District Attorney's Office, Trinity County Sheriff's Department and California Highway Patrol also assisted in the investigation and arrests.

Tehama County District Attorney Gregg Cohen commended the team, stating, "This is another tremendous example of local and state law enforcement being supported 110% by both federal law enforcement agencies and by McGregor Scott, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of California. This operation precisely illustrates what the combined efforts of local, state and federal law enforcement can do when we work collectively. With a commitment by Mr. Scott to handle these defendants federally, we in the Northstate are truly getting the biggest bang for our buck. Plain and simple, federal prosecution allows for tougher sentences upon conviction when compared to prosecution at the state level; which is exactly what should happen in this "superlab" case. I'd like to personally commend the efforts of each law enforcement agency and the efforts of all personnel who participated in this operation. I'd also like to once again thank United States Attorney McGregor Scott for his continued commitment to the entire Northstate."

Clay Parker, Tehama County Sheriff stated, "The Sheriff's office greatly appreciates the efforts of McGregor Scott in his endeavors to prosecute people involved in drug trafficking and look forward to continuing our support to him for prosecuting these types of cases."

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Mary Grad.

The charges are only allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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